

# Regional and National Sea Grant Extension Programming

Some Issues, Opportunities, and Conceptual Mechanisms  
for Improving Sea Grant's Capabilities

*A Discussion Paper to the Assembly of Extension Program Leaders*

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Sea Grant is a unique partnership with public and private sectors, combining research, education, and technology transfer for public service. This national network of universities meets the changing environmental and economic needs of people in our coastal, ocean, and Great Lakes regions.

*Editor:* Rick Cooper

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# Foreword

In the fast-paced environment of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, a new paradox has emerged between the need to position an organization for the future and the difficulty of finding the planning time to do so. If not prioritized, strategic planning will not happen—leaving an organization unprepared for the future. The institutions and environment in which Sea Grant functions are rapidly changing. To adapt to and stay ahead of this change will require focusing the tremendous intellectual talent found within the Sea Grant network on developing new organizational paradigms for the business of Sea Grant.

In the Spring of 2000, five of us from the Sea Grant network—Judy Lemus (California), Bob Malouf (Oregon), Brian Miller (Illinois/Indiana), Jay Rasmussen (Oregon), and I—met for two days in Portland, Oregon, in order to develop a “think piece” on regional and national Sea Grant extension programming. From my perspective, this publication is a seminal work on how the Sea Grant network should organize regional and national extension programming in the future. The National Sea Grant Extension Review Panel’s 2000 report, *A Mandate to Engage Coastal Users*, relied on ideas in this report for its findings. The National Sea Grant Office has already used this report to shape several new programs, including the Coastal Community Development Program, the Fisheries Extension Enhancement Program, and the National Ports Specialist position.

For this report, special thanks go to the Assembly of Sea Grant Extension Program Leaders for providing talent and leadership, the requisite ingredients. I would also like to thank the Sea Grant Association and, in particular, Bob Malouf and Anders Andren for their intellectual contributions to the report. Oregon Sea Grant deserves special recognition for the report’s publication. The publication of *Regional and National Sea Grant Extension Programming: Issues, Opportunities, and Conceptual Mechanisms for Improving Sea Grant’s Capabilities* will ensure proper archiving of the ideas contained within. I am convinced these ideas will be of interest to the next generation of Sea Grant extension professionals.

*James D. Murray*  
*Program Leader for Extension National Sea Grant College Program*  
*Silver Spring, MD*  
*January, 2002*

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# Executive Summary

**O**ver the years, the Sea Grant network has used a variety of mechanisms to develop regional and national extension programs. As Sea Grant plans its future through the theme team process, it will be critical that well-functioning national and regional organizational structures are in place to successfully implement its vision. In addition, the National Sea Grant Extension Review Panel (the Panel) was recently tasked with making recommendations on national and regional extension programming. With this in mind, at the request of Jim Murray, National Sea Grant Office, the Assembly of Sea Grant Extension Program Leaders appointed a small committee to address issues related to national and regional extension programming.

The committee was tasked with examining the conditions under which it makes sense to establish regional and national programming and the most effective strategies for implementation. This report should be viewed as a white paper, or discussion piece. It is designed to provoke thinking on the issue of regional and national extension programming. The committee approached the task by trying to answer the question, “Is there a better way to develop regional and national extension programming?” We tried to avoid being prescriptive and instead present multiple views on issues.

Sea Grant is uniquely poised to serve as the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration’s (NOAA’s) window to the outside world. Throughout Sea Grant’s history, observers have commented on the necessity of having in place a well-structured and functioning regional infrastructure. Sea Grant has created a successful model as a community-based endeavor that responds to the needs of local constituents. Looking to the future, Sea Grant can extend this model to address community needs across local and regional boundaries. The opportunities and benefits extend to individual programs, the network, extension personnel, and, most importantly, to the community of users. The purpose of this report is to revisit regional and national extension programming for the purpose of improving Sea Grant’s capabilities.

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## Interprogram Networking

Sea Grant programs have traditionally been organized into regional networks based on geographical location. The premise behind this approach was that programs in a similar region might be facing common issues and the close proximity of their personnel would allow for increased interaction. However, this approach has met with mixed success. This report identifies examples of successful regional networks that can be used as guidance to those regional networks encountering barriers.

Networking can also be organized around issues instead of geographical regions. Issue-based networking (intellectual

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*A few commonly understood and supported practices of conduct would help regional Sea Grant Extension programs operate successfully.*

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regions) could be the dominant model for future networking, or it could function concurrently with the regional network model. Existing Sea Grant-related organizations and operating procedures do not provide a formal framework for agents and specialists to join together as intellectual regions. To address this issue, we recommend establishing “virtual networks” or other mechanisms to facilitate issue-based programming.

There are several inherent problems associated with the planning, creation, and operation of regional Sea Grant extension programs and positions. However, a few commonly understood and supported practices of conduct would help regional Sea Grant Extension programs operate successfully. Recommendations for best-conduct practices include the following: start by doing no harm; engage in planning, not scheming; aim to be inclusive, not exclusive; guarantee that extension ethics and practices are upheld; respect cooperating programs’ roles and jurisdictions; act in a fair manner; commit funding to partnerships; and earn trust but don’t expect it.

## **Internal Funding**

The following principles should be followed in the development of a networkwide funding process for regional and national programming with internal funds:

- New Sea Grant dollars, obtained via funding initiatives or other means, should eventually be folded into networkwide core funding.
- Core funding of individual Sea Grant College Programs (SGCP) should have a transparent and competitive means of growing.
- Any increases in core funding via a modified National Strategic Investment (NSI) process should be better integrated into individual SGCP omnibus plans so as to maximize involvement of communications, extension, and education.
- NSIs in the field relating to ocean, coastal, and Great Lakes resources should be developed cooperatively by the Panel, the National Sea Grant College Program Office, and the Sea Grant Institutes.

The two primary goals of this proposed process are (1) to provide an alternative to the NSIs as a means of mobilizing the Sea Grant network to address issues that are of national concern and (2) to grow the core of the Sea Grant programs. The heart of this proposed approach is provision of both the incentive and the means for Sea Grant programs to respond to centrally identified networkwide or regional needs. Follow-up evaluations through program assessment team (PAT) visits could adjust the program’s merit award (not its core), based at least in part on the program’s efforts and outcomes that address a specific need.

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Successful proposals for new activities would be funded immediately. But those new funds would not be added to the program's *core* until subsequent assessment—possibly a PAT visit—found that the proposed work had been successfully carried out. In other words, regardless of which process a program elected to use (either existing or proposed activities), funds would be added to the core only on the basis of performance.

## External Partnerships

Many federal agencies are now trying to build outreach programs to provide a connection with their users. The desire to incorporate outreach into these agencies provides challenges and opportunities for Sea Grant. Many feel that the most efficient way to provide extension for these other agencies is not to reinvent the wheel but rather to allow Sea Grant to provide the outreach for them, building on the administration and infrastructure that is already in place. If Sea Grant is to partner with other NOAA agencies or with other federal agencies to provide outreach, the advantages and disadvantages to this partnering should be considered. In light of these concerns, the recommendations in this report provide a mechanism for oversight and coordination of regional and national programs by all related Sea Grant programs and solve territorial problems with funding and housing.

We recommend several criteria for selecting partners:

- The mission of the partnering agency is compatible with Sea Grant.
- There must be widespread interest in doing state-level programming on the selected topics.
- The topic or issue selected should be in response to a need, not done opportunistically because funds are available. The process should be driven by traditional extension techniques.
- Any partnering agency involved must be willing to abide by extension principles of program delivery that do not advocate a single solution.

Extramural funds would be needed to develop new regional or national programming. Topics could be selected in one of three ways, two of which evolve from within Sea Grant and one of which (number three) is a response to outside opportunities.

- 1) Seek external funding for ongoing, successful, state-level projects to national or regional status (for example, NEMO and AquaNIC). This method has been used before and takes advantage of innovation developed in the network and transferred to other states.
- 2) Topics can correspond to issues developed by Sea Grant theme teams, which could provide input on the development of a request for proposals (RFP) (calling for the location of a national programming coordinator respon-

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*The recommendations in this report provide a mechanism for oversight and coordination of regional and national programs by all related Sea Grant programs.*

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sible for coordinating extension regional or national programming and providing project deliverables identified in the RFP) and assist in selection of successful proposals. In cases where adequate extension expertise was not present on the theme team, the theme team co-chairs could appoint a subcommittee of extension personnel to assist.

- 3) National and regional programming can be developed on new topics that are of mutual interest to Sea Grant and the partnering agency and are consistent with Sea Grant's mission and expertise, and when a sufficient number of programs are willing and able to conduct local programming at the local level. Topics for national or regional programming could be approved by a final decision-making authority with representation from all Sea Grant-related interests (such as the Leadership Council, Sea Grant Association [SGA], Assembly of Sea Grant Extension Program Leaders [SGEPL], or a combination of these parties). It is important that the decision-making authority identified has the ability to act quickly in cases of time-sensitive opportunities and that this authority has the support of the entire network (as stated previously).

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*This report suggests a framework for the coordination and administration of regional and national programming and extension specialists.*

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## **Administrative Frameworks**

This report suggests a framework for the coordination and administration of regional and national programming and extension specialists. A full-time employee is needed to coordinate all regional and national programming. This coordinator (and his or her administrative housing body) could serve as the oversight authority responsible for ensuring project deliverables and performance of any regional or national project coordinators or specialists hired on a competitive basis. Regional project coordinators would be funded by the extramural funds brought in to support the effort. Additional funds for local level programming and personnel would also be funded through the extramural initiative. Money brought in by the national coordinator for programming would pass through the National Sea Grant Office (NSGO) and be administered to the participating programs.

## **The Role of the NSGO**

Given the increased interest of federal agencies to replicate the model established by Sea Grant extension, as well as the obvious rationale and opportunities for regional and national extension programs, the National Office has a remarkable opportunity for leadership.

To be most effective in facilitating regional and national Sea Grant programming, the NSGO should

- Provide leadership and guidance, not management and supervision.
- Understand that the network is, and should be, concerned with maintaining its hard-earned integrity and reputation



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for providing unbiased, nonregulatory educational programming.

- Assist the Sea Grant network in nurturing the networking environment by encouraging needs assessments that result in meaningful, client-based extension programs or bottom-up approaches.
- Provide leadership in working with other federal agencies to identify national collaborative opportunities and possible funding initiatives.
- Support the sharing of information about regional or national Sea Grant Extension programming ideas, opportunities, and issues early, widely, and openly throughout the network.

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# I. Introduction

Over the years, the Sea Grant network has used a variety of mechanisms to develop regional and national extension programs. Examples include: bivariate, multivariate, regional, and at least one national-type extension position; informal national extension networks such as MarinaNet and HazNet; Global Environmental Change Education; various national and regional competitions and enhancements; and the outreach national strategic investment. Most observers would agree that the Sea Grant network has benefited by regional and national programming. However, too often the mechanisms used to facilitate regional and national programming have been developed largely ad hoc.

As Sea Grant plans its future through the theme team process, it will be critical that well-functioning national and regional organizational structures are in place to successfully implement its vision. Increasingly, addressing marine and coastal science issues requires a broad, multivariate approach. Funding opportunities are often enhanced if multivariate programs are in place to address coastal problems. In addition, the National Sea Grant Extension Review Panel is tasked with making recommendations on national and regional extension programming. With this in mind, at the request of Jim Murray, National Sea Grant Office, the Assembly of Sea Grant Extension Program Leaders appointed a small committee to address issues related to national and regional extension programming. The committee consists of Judy Lemus (California), Brian Miller (Illinois/Indiana), and Jay Rasmussen (Oregon) from the Assembly; Bob Malouf (Oregon), the extension liaison from the Sea Grant Association; and Jim Murray (NSGO). The committee considered two kinds of regional and national programming: 1) programs conducted within the Sea Grant Network, and 2) programs involving partners from outside the network, including other NOAA units.

Although the committee was given broad latitude for its approach, the committee was tasked with addressing the following specific issues:

- Under what conditions does it make sense to establish regional and national programming?
- How do we balance regional and national programming opportunities with the need to keep a core group of agents at the local level?
- Assuming there is a need for regional or national agents and specialists, are there best-management practices that can be used for the mechanics of establishing positions or programs? Who pays, and how?

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- Are there best practices for involving the Sea Grant Extension Program (SGEP) in national and regional competitions?
  - The regional networks have varying degrees of participation and effectiveness. Are there best practices for their organization and operation?
  - What is the NSGO's role in facilitating regional and national programs?

This report was developed by the committee through several conference calls and a two-day committee meeting in Portland, Oregon, on April 24 and 25, 2000. During the Portland meeting, the outline for the report was developed and the section writers were identified. The draft report was circulated to members of the Assembly before its biennial meeting in October 2000, and after discussion, modification, and approval, it was presented to the SGA at its November meeting.

The report should be viewed as a white paper, or discussion piece, and is designed to provoke thinking on the issue of regional and national extension programming. The committee's goal was to produce a report that was innovative and forward looking with regard to regional and national extension programming issues. The committee approached the task by trying to answer the question, "Is there a better way to develop regional and national extension programming?" We recognize that one important issue that remains is the balancing of regional and national opportunities with the need to keep a core group of agents at the local level. We hope this report will generate further discussion on this issue. We tried to avoid being prescriptive and instead present multiple views on issues. The ultimate goal is to identify mechanisms to enable the SGEP to more effectively deliver programs to its clientele.

*The views expressed in the report are those of the committee. The approaches and suggestions presented in this paper are not intended to limit or place restrictions on two or more programs wishing to join together to conduct regional or national programming (as they do now); rather, it is intended to provide a framework that facilitates additional programming. The committee hopes the report will be used to stimulate and generate discussion within the Assembly, the SGA, the NSGO, and the Sea Grant Review Panel. In particular, we hope the discussion will be useful for the deliberations of the National Sea Grant Extension Review Panel.*

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## II. Background

**M**ost observers would agree that Sea Grant is more than the sum of its parts, because in addition to its local program capabilities, Sea Grant has the capacity and ability to plan, organize, and deliver programs as a coordinated network. It identifies regional and national problems, shares talent, trains agents and specialists, and organizes outreach programs at the regional or national level. SGEP develops programs at the local level, but local constituents are better served if SGEP has access to expertise outside its jurisdiction.

Over Sea Grant's 31-year history, there have been numerous examples of value added being gained through the development of networkwide SGEP activities. For example, the Sea Grant network developed the Hazard Analysis Critical Control Point (HACCP) program, which benefited approximately 10,000 seafood businesses nationwide and was awarded the Silver Hammer award by Vice President Gore as an example of extraordinarily effective government programs.

Efficiency is at the core of regional and national programming. No one program can afford to fund and hire all of the pieces necessary to develop a national program such as HACCP, but by using the collective talents within the network, Sea Grant can develop and deliver a comprehensive educational program.

The concept of working regionally and nationally is almost as old as the Sea Grant program. In the 1970s, all regional networks were eligible to submit proposals and receive operating budgets, and in the case of the Northeast region, an office was established to coordinate regional programs. The 1983 report titled *The National Sea Grant Advisory Program\** recognized the value of the nationwide network, as evidenced by the following:

It is common for the results of a Sea Grant research project at one university to be applied throughout the nation because the advisory service network works in concert with other organizations and agencies. In this way, regional or inter-institutional projects produce results that are of national importance.

In part because of budget constraints, by the 1990s there was concern that the networking concept was being diminished. As reported in the 1992 think piece titled *Sea Grant Marine Advisory Service: the Nation's Coastal Technology Transfer Program for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*,

The networking concept is not working as well as it has in the past. There are a number of constraints (distance, financial, institutional and personnel) that often prevent regional networking from operating effectively. A diminished regional effectiveness may be adversely affecting clientele services.

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*Efficiency is at the core of regional and national programming.*

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\*Chaired by Jim Cato.

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The report concluded that “the regional infrastructure should be examined to determine if improvements can be made to strengthen SGMAS programmatic capabilities and efficiencies.”

More recently, the 2000 report by the National Research Council, *Bridging Boundaries through Regional Marine Research*, recommended that to enable regional marine research, programs should

Establish a communications network that effectively links political, social, economic and environmental interests in the design, implementation and evolution of the program for more effective science education, public outreach, economic development and management of ecosystems and living resources;

and

Ensure sustained public and political support for the stable funding through outreach activities that increase awareness of current research activities, describe changes in the health of coastal ecosystems, and explain how the results of research and monitoring are used to support environmental decision-making. This last element, building public and political support, is essential to the success of regional research programs.

*In short, throughout Sea Grant’s history, observers have commented on the necessity of having in place a well-designed and functioning regional infrastructure. The purpose of this report is to revisit regional and national extension programming for the purpose of improving Sea Grant’s capabilities. If regional programming were easy, this report would not be necessary. The committee recognizes that there are obstacles and impediments to regional and national programming, including the following:*

- How do we balance regional and national programming with local needs?
- Who or what process determines the regional and national priorities, and how?
- Who pays for the effort?
- Who manages and is responsible for regional and national programs?
- Are the incentive structures adequate to pursue regional and national programming?
- How do we maintain long-term support for personnel for regional and national needs?
- How do we address the ad hoc nature of the regional networks? Often there is responsibility without authority.

*The committee hopes to provoke a dialogue within the Sea Grant network on how Sea Grant can overcome impediments to regional and national programming so that the benefits of this collaborative, larger-scale programming can be fully realized.*

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*“The regional infrastructure should be examined to determine if improvements can be made to strengthen SGMAS programmatic capabilities and efficiencies.”*

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## III. Opportunities and Rationale

**S**ea Grant has created a successful model as a community-based endeavor that responds to the needs of local constituents. Looking to the future, Sea Grant can extend this model to address community needs across local and regional boundaries. A number of factors, including increasing populations, urban sprawl, increased infrastructure for travel, and emigration toward coastal cities, have blurred the distinction between once-separate communities—geographically as well as culturally and economically. It has also resulted in the amalgamation of a number of issues that are common to almost every coastal city in the world: water quality, invasive species, habitat destruction, seafood safety, coastal hazards, and planning and development.

Likewise, ocean resources rarely adhere to political boundaries, and their successful management often requires cooperation throughout the geographical ranges of species. The committee believes that while it has always been a good idea, it is now imperative for Sea Grant to step up efforts toward national and regional extension programming. The opportunities and benefits extend to individual programs, the network, extension personnel, and most importantly, to the community of users.

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- **Building on the model.** Sea Grant extension is a model program in terms of its responsiveness to the needs of local users and the marine environment. Regional and national collaboration build upon this foundation by increasing the reach of each Sea Grant program while maintaining connections to local communities. Being connected with others means more resources at hand and a greater ability to find innovative solutions to new problems when they arise.
- **Efficiency.** When issues cross state boundaries, it is more cost-efficient to share personnel among Sea Grant programs to avoid redundancy. Having one person with expertise in a particular discipline cover a broad geographical area will be more efficient than having several agents among various programs spend a portion of their time on the same issue. This efficiency accrues with respect to training and contacts with external users.
- **Maintaining capacity.** Similarly, it is probably better to share expertise across programs than to lose capacity in a particular area because of lack of funding. Consistency of service and accountability will contribute to the overall strength of the programs.
- **Diversity.** Sharing positions and expertise allows for a greater diversity of program areas within the network as a whole. Programs that have one or two program areas as

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their main focus would be able to branch out into other areas of interest to the community if resources are shared with one or several other programs.

- **Incentives to programs and individuals.** Programs and individuals both benefit when resources and expertise are shared among programs. Programs with multi-institutional positions will be better informed about regional issues and have increased capacity to serve users. Individual personnel benefit from gaining experience in new issues and exposure to a variety of communities and regions, which add substantially to their effectiveness when dealing with new challenges and increased collegiality. Increased collaboration among programs serves users by affording flexibility and enhanced capability to respond to their needs.
- **Solution to problems.** Effective response to community needs requires the flexibility to address a wide variety of issues. Regional and shared positions enhance the capabilities of programs to respond to emerging issues in their regions. The interconnection of coastal marine environments emphasizes the need for regional problems to be solved with a regional approach. Such problems may be too big for any one program to tackle alone and can be accomplished by networking access to researchers/information through agents in other states.
- **Training.** Regional experts and specialists afford opportunities for training extension professionals in individual programs in areas of regional importance or in areas that are relevant to a program but for which there are no trained personnel. A “train the trainers” approach helps to multiply knowledge among programs for maximum effect.
- **NOAA extension.** Sea Grant has a unique model within NOAA for transferring research results and technology to users in a very effective and personal way. This uniqueness comes from Sea Grant’s focus on outcomes and impacts instead of products and public relations. NOAA has already recognized the value of the Sea Grant extension philosophy to its diverse community of users, and Sea Grant is uniquely poised to serve as NOAA’s window to the outside world.

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## IV. The Role of Interprogram Networking

**T**he regional and national Sea Grant extension programming that has occurred to date typically has been accomplished by voluntary efforts where two or more programs have banded together for the purpose of combining skills, talents, and resources to address an issue of mutual interest. In some cases, this collaboration was catalyzed by an RFP requesting multiprogram involvement. In other cases, collaboration resulted from formal, regional network activities (for example, shared network publications resulting from work team activities). Sometimes, the collaboration was born out of an issue-based concern that many programs shared (Global Environmental Change Education, MarinaNet, HazNet, Coastwatch, AquaNIC).

While Sea Grant can show many successes in regional and national extension programming that has resulted from interprogram networking, this networking can be strengthened by institutionalizing some of the successful networking strategies and providing a more formalized structure where programs and individuals can join together to collaborate. The suggestions that follow describe strategies that have been effective in the past and offer some new ideas that might allow for more cohesive regional and national programming in the future.

### **Regional or Geography-Based Networking**

Sea Grant programs have organized into regional networks based on geographical location. The idea behind this approach was to provide programs a structure in which they could band together to work on issues of mutual interest and concern. The premise behind this approach was that programs in a similar region might be facing common issues, and the close proximity of their personnel would allow for increased interaction. This approach has met with mixed success. Some regional networks have been strong and active for short periods, while other regions have been able to sustain longer periods of success. The characteristics that have contributed to regional network success and those problems that have contributed to network inactivity are detailed below.

### **Characteristics of Successful Regional Networks**

- Networks have regular meetings (once every one to two years) and require that all staff attend.

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*This networking can be strengthened by institutionalizing some of the successful networking strategies and providing a more formalized structure where programs and individuals can join together to collaborate.*

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- Network meetings can be opportunities for joint training of staff on topics of mutual interest and concern.
  - Network meetings are considered to be meetings for staff and the agenda is driven by them (through a committee made up of a representative of each program).
  - Network meetings provide a time and format for the sharing of ideas and strategies that work.
  - Staff are required to join topic-specific work teams that identify objectives they wish to accomplish and deliverables they will produce by the next network meeting.
  - The network program leaders have regular conference calls (quarterly) to discuss issues and business of importance to the network and to keep updated on work team progress. Chairs rotate on a regular basis.
  - Awards for staff participating in regional and national network programming can be made at the regular meetings on behalf of the network.
  - Network program leaders collectively consider how to fund network projects and activities. Work teams and program leaders are encouraged to develop inclusive network proposals in response to RFPs when possible, instead of submitting individual proposals that compete with or duplicate one another.
  - Communication staff in the network are an integral part of the regional network meetings and work teams.
  - It is important for directors to be supportive of regular network meetings.

### **Barriers to Successful Regional Networking and Suggestions for Improvement**

- Existing regional networks were defined based on geographical boundaries and in some cases may not correspond to issues the programs may have in common. This is especially true in large states covering a diversity of climates and ecological diversity (for example, Hawaii may have more issues in common with the Southeastern or gulf states than the Northwestern states). Therefore, some redefinition of regions may be needed.
- Large states that are far apart may make it more difficult and costly for staff to meet on a regular basis for network meetings. Teleconferencing or computer videoconferencing may be needed to make regular interaction cost-effective.
- The network will be only as strong as the leadership and organization provided. Since leadership rotates and individual commitments to the network concept may vary, all program leaders involved in a network must ensure that regular conference calls and work team business are conducted as expected and assist the acting chair if per-

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*Program leaders must recognize and reward staff for participating in network projects that are appropriate and provide a greater gain than working alone.*

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sonal circumstances do not allow them to contribute the attention network details require.

- It often takes more time and energy to work collaboratively with others on a project or proposal than to do it yourself (although the gains of cooperative projects may be greater). Program leaders must recognize and reward staff for participating in network projects that are appropriate and provide a greater gain than working alone. Program leaders must also assist staff with overcoming institutional barriers that make developing multi-institutional proposals difficult and time consuming (transfer of funds, multiple IDC charges, letters of commitment and support, etc.). Program leaders must ensure that their staff honors deliverables, timelines, and commitments made in network proposals. If one part of the project is late or unfinished, it often delays others and requires everyone to file no-cost extensions or to leave the project unfinished. Programs leaders must be willing to commit to network projects if the gains from the collaboration are greater than working alone and should assist in project design to ensure this.

### **Issue-based Networking, or Intellectual Regions**

Networking can also be organized around issues instead of geographical regions. Several good examples of issue-based programming have been the result of programs' across the country participating in projects of mutual interest (for example, HAACP, MarinaNet, HazNet, and Global Environmental Change Education). Issue-based networking could be the dominant model for future networking or could easily run concurrently with the regional network model. Much can be gained by employing both approaches simultaneously. Strong regional networks ensure long-term collaboration and cooperation among programs while a formalized structure for issue-based programming allows for concentrated efforts on issues that are of importance to more than one region. Our existing Sea Grant-related organizations and operating procedures allow for issue-based programming to be developed in two ways: from the bottom up or from the top down.

Issue-based networking can be started from the bottom up by two or more programs joining together to tackle an issue of common concern. This process could be formally facilitated by the SGEPL through issue-based work teams. The SGEPL work teams could decide what objectives need to be accomplished, what resources are needed to accomplish them, what regions and programs are in the best position to address this issue, and where resources might be obtained to accomplish this. The Extension program leaders involved could then work with their staff to respond to and participate in this issue and could work collectively to obtain funding (perhaps through a collective proposal to National Sea Grant, NOAA, or some other agency). The assembly as a whole is

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responsible for determining what topics warrant the formation of a work group. Any work groups formed would be accountable to the entire assembly for their productivity and could be required to identify their two-year objectives (corresponding with SGEPL meeting cycles) to the assembly, to report their progress to the executive committee prior to their regular conference calls, and to give a report at each regular assembly meeting.

Issue-based programming can also be started from the top down by the SGA or the national office identifying issues that need attention. The process could be catalyzed by identifying objectives, setting aside funds to accomplish this objective, and issuing an RFP to develop a network activity that is issue based and accomplishes the desired objectives. This approach is discussed in more detail in section VI of this report.

Existing Sea Grant-related organizations and operating procedures do not provide a formal framework for agents and specialists to join together to work on an issue of common concern. This would be of particular value to new staff or personnel that reside in a remote location and would provide excellent in-house learning opportunities for all staff working on a particular issue. In the above examples, work teams can be created and monitored under the umbrella of a parent organization such as the SGEPL or regional networks. Since no organization exists for agents and specialists, perhaps a “virtual network” could be established. The SGEPL could supply server space and support for discussion groups.

This process could be started by having a general discussion group where agents and specialists could interact and determine topics of common interest. Once sufficient interest was established, they could petition the SGEPL to have a separate discussion group established for that topic. Once the group was established, everyone in the discussion group would essentially become a work team and would follow the guidelines described above for SGEPL work teams. The discussion group is just a tool that allows the work team to meet and communicate. A more active communication alternative would be through listservs or computer videoconferencing. Any of these communication techniques could be supported and administered by the SGEPL.

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*Existing Sea Grant-related organizations and operating procedures allow for issue-based programming to be developed in two ways: from the bottom up or from the top down.*

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## V. Best-Conduct practices for Regional Sea Grant Extension

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*The desire to meet a broad set of geographic or programmatic needs in an efficient manner promotes strong interest in regional Sea Grant extension programs.*

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**T**he desire to meet a broad set of geographic or programmatic needs in an efficient manner promotes strong interest in regional Sea Grant extension programs within the network and by the national office. More recently, interest has grown in determining information needs of stakeholders and extending the research knowledge of other agencies within the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) through Sea Grant extension, often at a regional level.

In the planning for and the creation and operation of regional Sea Grant extension programs and positions, all the inherent problems of personnel associated with academic staff are exacerbated by a number of factors. These factors include traditional skepticism and competition between semisovereign state programs, by issues of funding arrangements and long-term commitments among the partnering programs, by the faculty member's ability to provide services that are seen proportional to the program's investment, and often by the geography involved (particularly in the West).

However, there seems to be a plethora of commonly understood and, it is hoped, supported practices of conduct that would help ensure a considerably improved opportunity for regional Sea Grant extension programs to operate successfully—if not flourish. These practices can be described using the initials SEA GRANT:

- **S**tart by doing no harm. Avoid surprises among immediate cooperators, members of the network, the national office, and other partners. Understand that regional Sea Grant extension personnel and their respective state programs require new levels of communication.
- **E**ngage in planning, not scheming. Regional positions should be developed with a broad consensus among all parts of the network based on needs of users and stakeholders.
- **A**im to be inclusive, not exclusive. Competition between programs will encourage taking other approaches that will, over time, significantly erode cooperative, collaborative opportunities.
- **G**uarantee that extension ethics and practices are upheld. In interactions with other agencies, expectations should be clear about what extension means (unbiased, science based, client driven, nonadvocacy)—and what it doesn't mean (such as public relations).

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- **R**espect cooperating programs' roles and jurisdictions. When working across borders, request approval and invite the host program to participate.
  - **A**ct in a fair manner. Fair means equitable—not necessarily equal. Shared work should be fairly and consistently credited to all of the collaborating partners and not differently for home markets than for the network.
  - **N**umbers are important. The funding commitment of regional Sea Grant extension programs should be as strong among partners as the commitment for regular positions. New funding should be apportioned relative to work, and shared work should be balanced with shared support. True regional efforts should be more efficient and cost-effective than coordinated efforts conducted by individual programs. Staff and equipment should not be duplicated but rather shared, so programming can be developed and conducted in the most cost-effective manner possible. The institution housing these resources should be the one in the best position to manage them and which can add efficiency by contributing existing staff and infrastructure.
  - **T**rust is earned and can be easily lost among all participants. Two serious ways partners can destroy trust and reduce effectiveness are to talk about regional cooperation but act to the contrary in how they treat funding commitment, shared credit, and conduct in the development of joint proposals and budgets, and to fail at fulfilling project deliverables by the contract date, thus leaving partners in a position where they cannot fulfill their obligations.

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*The funding commitment of regional Sea Grant extension programs should be as strong among partners as the commitment for regular positions.*

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# VI. New Approaches to Implementation: Suggested Internal and External Models

## A. An Internal Model

*Derived from a white paper submitted to SGA on July 18, 2000, by R. Malouf, Oregon Sea Grant; and A. W. Andren, Wisconsin Sea Grant.*

### ***Vision and Principles***

The overall vision is that the National Sea Grant College Program can be responsive to our nation's marine and Great Lakes needs via core-funded efforts.

The following principles have been followed in the development of a networkwide funding process that will allow the vision to be realized.

1. New SG dollars, obtained through funding initiatives or other means, should eventually be folded into networkwide core funding.
2. Core funding of individual Sea Grant College Programs (SGCP) should have a transparent and competitive means of growing.
3. Any increases in core funding through a modified NSI process should be better integrated into individual SGCP omnibus plans so as to maximize involvement of communications, extension, and education.
4. National Strategic Investments (NSIs) in the field relating to ocean, coastal, and Great Lakes resources should be developed cooperatively by the Panel, the National Sea Grant College Program Office, and the Sea Grant Institutes.

### **Background and Rationale**

The two primary goals of this proposed process are (1) to provide an alternative to the NSIs as a means of mobilizing the Sea Grant network to address issues that are of national concern, and (2) to grow the core of the Sea Grant programs. The proposed concept is based on recognition that the programs' core funding has been so seriously eroded over the past two decades that the programs are having great difficulty maintaining current activities, much less responding to emerging national needs.

At the same time, we hope to improve the *quality* of the network's response to national needs. Currently, at the level of an individual program, responses to the NSIs involve only one or two independent proposals that are unrelated to each other and are related to the program's omnibus plan only by

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accident. We believe that funding the responses through the core would allow them to become integrated into the programs' omnibus plans. Thus integrated into the programs' omnibus proposals, the network's response would be vastly improved, because responsive activity could then appropriately involve communications, extension, and education—not just research.

Clearly, funds for the proposed new process would need to come from the same sources that now support NSIs. That would reduce the number of NSIs or their scale. However, we are *not* proposing complete elimination of the NSIs. We recognize that they serve a purpose. On the other hand, we believe that some of the objectives of NSIs (for example, building partnerships with other NOAA entities) would have been more effective had the funds been used to provide incentives and rewards to the programs through their core funding, as we propose below.

### **Procedure**

The heart of this proposed approach is provision of both the incentive and the means for Sea Grant programs to respond to centrally identified networkwide or regional needs.

Networkwide response funding might be as follows. The first step would be identification by the National Sea Grant Office (NSOG) of an issue or issues (for example, invasive species) or a desired programmatic practice (for example, use of regional partnerships). Of course, we would hope that NSGO would employ an open and inclusive process to identify the needs, but the specifics of that process are outside the scope of this document. Having identified the response that they seek from the Sea Grant network, the NSGO would next make that response known to the 30 programs. What form the notification might take, and particularly what the timing should be, are critical issues, but we are confident that those issues could be resolved if this new concept is itself accepted.

Although details are not given here, we do want to emphasize two areas of concern. First, lead time for a networkwide response will need to be greater than has generally been the case for the NSIs. This new concept has its foundation and its strength in a reward system and will require time for the programs to respond. Second, there needs to be included a clear statement of the NSGO's expectations and its criteria for assessment of responses to nationally identified needs. That is, the programs obviously would have to clearly understand how the NSGO will determine whether or not they are adequately responding to or proposing to respond to the expressed need.

Once a networkwide response has been solicited, we propose two different ways that each program might respond. To a certain extent the response is a matter of choice, but that choice is largely predetermined by whether or not they already have activity underway and included in their omnibus plan that they believe meets the expectations of the NSGO relative to the identified need. Initially, each program would need to choose one process or another, not both.

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*The heart of this proposed approach is provision of both the incentive and the means for Sea Grant programs to respond to centrally identified networkwide or regional needs.*

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1. **Responding with ongoing activities:** If programs have activities that they believe already constitute a response, that is, that already fit the NSGO's stated criteria for responsiveness, we propose that they present the ongoing programs to an assessment process that the NSGO would use to verify that the activities meet those criteria. If the assessment process verifies that the criteria are being met, funds would be added to the program's core award. These would *not* be "merit" funds but would become part of the program's core. However, as with merit funds, the amount available to any one program would be capped in such a way that it is possible for all programs to be successful. If the NSGO does not accept the ongoing activities as being responsive to the identified needs, the program would still have the option of pursuing increases to its core through the proposal process described below.

If the need for a networkwide response is a continuing one (for example, regional programming), future PAT visits would conduct followup evaluations and could adjust the program's merit award (not its core) based at least in part on the program's efforts and outcomes that address the need.

2. **Responding by proposing new activities:** If a program chooses not to submit ongoing work for assessment, or if its ongoing work is determined by assessment to be unresponsive, then the program can propose new responsive activities. Proposed new funding to each program would be capped at an amount that would be equivalent to the "reward" added to program's cores for already having responsive activities underway. That way (and in that way only), the process could result in the funding of all the proposals. Such proposals would be evaluated on the basis of established standards in a process that would need to be developed for that purpose. Although the evaluation would in some sense be competitive, it would be primarily a matter of determining whether or not the proposals are likely to effectively address the need. *Successful proposals would be funded immediately. But those new funds would not be added to the program's core until subsequent assessment, possibly a PAT visit, found that the proposed work had been successfully carried out. In other words, whichever process a program elected to use (either existing or proposed activities), funds would be added to the core only on the basis of performance.*

We feel that the proposal process would both stimulate new activity and help level the playing field for programs. Compared to smaller programs, large programs can obviously afford to have a wider variety of activities underway at any one time. Therefore, large programs have a higher probability of already having responsive work underway. If the only mechanism available for programs to receive additions to their core were based on ongoing activity, then it is probable that relatively large programs would get even larger, and the gap between large and small programs would grow wider.

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*The proposal process would both stimulate new activity and help level the playing field for programs.*

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Further, although funding resulting from a successful proposal would not immediately be part of the core, the inclusion of the second process at least provides an opportunity for all programs to receive additional funding at about the same time.

The two processes outlined above are intended to eventually add funding to each program's core award. At the same time, the processes would reward programs for responding to identified national needs. Particularly in situations where the nationally identified need involves a fundamental change in the program's practices (for example, a need for better regional partnerships), future PAT visits could reinforce the reward and institutionalize the practice by including continued responsiveness to the need among the criteria used for programmatic assessment. On the other hand, any program that for whatever reason does not want to or cannot respond to the identified national need could simply forgo the additional funding. We submit that, having declined to accept funds targeted for a nationally identified activity, the program should not be expected in future PAT visits to have increased its involvement in that activity, at least to the extent expected of programs that have accepted such funding. In other words, we are primarily proposing a process for rewarding programs for being responsive, not a process for punishing unresponsive programs.

## **B. An External Model**

Many Sea Grant programs are struggling to maintain extension positions, and in some cases they will lose positions to inflation. As Sea Grant looks to the future and implements its growth strategy, pursuit of external funding and partnering with other agencies could provide one avenue of growth for extension programs.

Sea Grant is known throughout NOAA and other federal agencies as having a successful extension and outreach program that provides a critical connection with users. As funding becomes tighter and reauthorization becomes more difficult, agencies find that this connection with users is critical to maintain or increase funding in the appropriations process. Therefore, many federal agencies are trying to build outreach programs to provide this connection with their users. The desire to incorporate outreach into these agencies provides challenges and opportunities for Sea Grant.

When potential partnerships have been discussed, some program leaders feel that additional extension programs in the same parent agency would give Sea Grant extension personnel other people to work with in these agencies and would provide a conduit for involvement with their scientists. However, many feel that the most efficient way to provide extension for these other agencies is not to reinvent the wheel, but rather to allow Sea Grant to provide the outreach for their building on the administration and infrastructure that is already in place (provided that adequate additional funds are supplied to cover the increased activi-

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*As Sea Grant looks to the future and implements its growth strategy, pursuit of external funding and partnering with other agencies could provide one avenue of growth for extension programs.*

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ties). This latter view is the premise on which the committee developed the following external model.

The idea of forming partnerships with Sea Grant to conduct outreach minimizes competition for funds and clients, reduces inefficiencies that result from duplicating extension infrastructure, and avoids duplication and overlap between programs that add a layer of difficulty. Sea Grant has some experience in developing national programming with partnering agencies. For about 10 years, several Sea Grant programs (New Hampshire, Virginia, Mississippi/Alabama, Wisconsin, Washington, and Hawaii, plus land grant Extension in Nebraska) worked together to provide education on our changing global environment to educators and the public. Funding came from NOAA's Office of Global Programs (OGP), USDA, and NASA as well as state and local sources. Products included a nationwide videoconference, regional workshops, and a resource guide useful for teaching that science to others. This was an excellent joint effort and we can draw on its experiences.

If Sea Grant is to partner with other NOAA agencies or with other federal agencies to provide outreach, several advantages and disadvantages to this partnering should be considered.

### **Potential Advantages**

- More funds could be obtained to expand Sea Grant extension capabilities and products.
- Linkages could be established with more scientists in other agencies. This would expand the base of research that could be transferred, thus providing a greater service to clients.
- Competition in other agencies for clients, funding, and programs would be reduced.
- Sea Grant's value to other partnering agencies would be increased.
- Sea Grant could expand program areas and reach more constituents, turning potential competition into partnerships.
- Opportunity for Sea Grant to play a lead role in initiating extension within NOAA and other partnering agencies rather than reacting to initiatives.
- Other agencies would have access to Sea Grant extension programming, expertise, infrastructure, and clients.

### **Potential Disadvantages**

- Sea Grant could lose some control of programming and issue selection.
- Sea Grant's unbiased, science-based, nonregulatory status could be compromised.

The concept of sharing positions and partnering to do national and regional extension programming with other agencies has been discussed and attempted on two occasions

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*More funds could be obtained to expand Sea Grant extension capabilities and products.*

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during the past year (GLERL position and NMFS/SG positions). A number of concerns are raised by individual programs in the network regarding how these positions will be funded, housed, and administered:

- Will extension issues be client driven (bottom up) or will programming and direction be dictated by the partner agency (top down)?
- Who decides what issues, locations, and extension needs are important?
- Will new program areas with new criteria regarding eligibility, definitions of “region” and “national,” and other matters be established?
- Will positions and programming dollars be competitive?
- What is the role of SGA, individual directors, and their program leaders in competing for and participating in these programs?
- Who determines the equity of the positions by region or subject?
- Who would determine where positions are housed and where supervision for positions comes from?
- How do we ensure that regional and national programs and positions stay regional or national without getting captured by the housing program?
- If positions or programs are attached to other federal agencies, would they continue Sea Grant extension’s fine tradition of extending objective information and educational experience, or would the positions and programs become purveyors of the funding agency’s agenda, putting priority on public relations and agency marketing and thus jeopardizing our unbiased, science-based status?
- Would new regional and national programs compete for core funds (now or in the future) that support state programs? Are we in essence giving up locally driven extension programs in order to support a regional or national program?

Many problems that occurred when discussing new shared programs centered around the logistics of sharing a person who represents the region or nation on a particular project. Some problems are logistical and are related to equitable distribution of time and attention to all participating programs and the variation of support facilities and programming in participating states. Some are topical, variations in target audiences, or local issues. Some problems are political, related to control of the position; how do positions other than the housing program get their fair share? And finally, how will positions and programming be supported long term? Will it be the burden of the housing or initiating programs to pick up the burden if extramural funding diminishes?

In light of these concerns, we have developed a template for a model that we believe addresses many of the above

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*The model described provides a mechanism for oversight of regional and national programs by all related Sea Grant programs, provides a mechanism for coordination, and solves territorial problems with funding and housing.*

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concerns and provides a framework whereby Sea Grant can play a lead role in providing national and regional extension programming, for scientific results generated by scientists in other related agencies, that strengthens Sea Grant's overall mission to better serve its clients. We believe the model described provides a mechanism for oversight of regional and national programs by all related Sea Grant programs, provides a mechanism for coordination, and solves territorial problems with funding and housing.

The national office should be empowered to act on behalf of the Sea Grant network in exploring opportunities with other agencies (as outlined in section VII) and should communicate such activities openly with the network. This report strives to outline some guiding principles that the NSGO can follow when exploring and discussing opportunities for regional or national programming funded by an external agency. The guiding principles are as follows:

**External Partnership Selection Criteria:**

- The mission of the partnering agency is compatible with Sea Grant, and that agency provides access to quality scientific information that can be extended to Sea Grant clients.
- There must be widespread interest in doing state-level programming on the selected topics. If the issue is national, a significant number of programs must have interest in working on the program at the local level. Regional projects require interest from a majority of the programs in the region.
- The topic or issue selected should be in response to a need, not done opportunistically because funds are available. The process should be driven by traditional extension techniques. Needs and values of users should be the first consideration. In cases of nonconsensus, a body (such as the Leadership Council) should be empowered to make a final decision regarding Sea Grant's involvement in this topic or issue. Once a decision is reached, it is important for the entire network to support the leadership, stand by the decision, and speak with one voice.
- Any partnering agency involved must be willing to abide by extension principles of program delivery that does not advocate a single solution, but presents a range of science-based alternatives from which users select a solution.

**Balance:**

- When designing the regional or national program, Sea Grant must maintain a balance of personnel and resources between regional and national coordination and oversight and the carrying out of extension programming in the field. All regional and national programs should provide for an adequate amount of personnel and resources to coordinate the program. Support materials must be developed and adaptable model programming delivered to local

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extension staff. Technical expertise and assistance for local extension staff must be provided so they can adapt the programming to their local conditions. Adequate funds for field staff and support should be budgeted to allow the programming to be adapted and conducted at the local level.

### **Selection of Topics for Regional or National Programming**

Extramural funds would be needed to develop new regional or national programming. Topics could be selected in one of three ways.

#### ***Evolution of Programs from within Sea Grant***

- Seek external funding for ongoing successful state-level projects to national or regional status (for example, NEMO and AquaNIC). This method has been used before and takes advantage of innovation developed in the network and transferred to other states.
- Topics can correspond to issues developed by Sea Grant “theme teams.” In these cases, the theme team could serve as the steering committee for the regional or national program. The theme team could provide input on the development of an RFP (calling for the location of a national programming coordinator responsible for coordinating extension programming regionally or nationally and providing project deliverables identified in the RFP) and assist in selection of successful proposals. In cases where adequate extension expertise was not currently present on the theme team, a subcommittee of extension personnel could be appointed by the theme team co-chairs to assist.

#### ***Responding to External Opportunities***

- National and regional programming can be developed on new topics that are of mutual interest to Sea Grant and the partnering agency and that are consistent with Sea Grant’s mission and expertise. There must also be a sufficient number of programs willing and able to conduct local programming at the local level. Topics could be proposed by the SGEPL through work team development as described in section VI. They could also be proposed by NSGO, SGA, and agencies with dollars to invest in extension or through congressional earmarks. These topics for national or regional programming could be approved by a final decision-making authority that had representation from all Sea Grant-related interests (such as the Leadership Council, SGA, SGEPL, or a combination of these parties). It is important that the decision-making authority identified has the ability to act quickly in cases of time-sensitive opportunities and that this authority has the support of the entire network (as stated previously). (This process is not intended to stifle or replace the ongoing model of two or more Sea Grant programs from working together to

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*Extramural funds would be needed to develop new regional or national programming.*

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pursue funding and conduct a regional or national program, nor does it imply that approval would be needed for this existing bottom-up approach.)

### **Framework for the Coordination and Administration of Regional and National Programming**

- In the role of the National Sea Grant Office chapter (section VII), we identified that an FTE or partial FTE was needed to coordinate all regional and national programming efforts and to facilitate the development of programming opportunities between Sea Grant and other agencies. This position would be responsible for obtaining extramural funding for regional and national issues and would establish new programs between Sea Grant and funding agencies following the guiding principles in this document. This individual could be physically and administratively housed in the NSGO (or alternatively with the executive director of SGA). It is important that the administrative and supervisory arrangement selected give all components of the National Sea Grant network some representation in decisions made regarding this position and the activities conducted by this individual, thus alleviating the concern of top-down national and regional program oversight.
- Money brought in by this individual for programming would pass through the NSGO and be administered to the participating programs using existing funding channels or a new internal funding model, such as identified in section IV of this report.
- The national programming coordinator (and his or her administrative housing body) could serve as the oversight authority responsible for ensuring project deliverables and performance of any regional or national project coordinators that were hired on a competitive basis. The reporting to a national or regional program coordinator who is neutrally located ensures that broad program participation is encouraged and facilitated and alleviates the concern that any one program or the NSGO would control the position. These project coordinators (for projects like NEMO, HAACP, ERLS, NERRS, NSF, FDA) could be physically housed anywhere in the network and should be located in the program or university where program expertise and project administration are most efficient and beneficial. This location could be determined on a competitive basis where individual programs responded to an RFP outlining the duties and deliverables expected from a regional or national project coordinator.
- Project coordinators would be funded by the extramural funds brought in to support the effort. Additional funds for local-level programming and personnel would also be funded through the extramural initiative. Coordinators need not be new personnel, but could be existing person-

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*The reporting to a national or regional program coordinator who is neutrally located ensures that broad program participation is encouraged and facilitated.*

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nel in the SG network already devoting a major portion of their time to the project and providing this leadership at the present time. This transfer of funds removes the administrative burden placed on an individual program to provide regional or nation coordination and provides a more stable funding source for the program. These types of positions could also be funded as part-time appointments as funding for the program allowed, thus reducing the administrative costs of coordinating any one project.

The model outlined above presents an administrative framework for national programming that would allow for national coordination, regional planning and prioritization, and local implementation of any new national or regional extension initiatives. In this example framework, national coordination of a networkwide project could be provided by a project coordinator (funded competitively) responsible for deliverables to a national programming coordinator housed in Washington, and the project could be steered by an oversight committee representing all components of the Sea Grant network (whether this were provided by existing theme teams, SGEPL work teams, or a steering committee appointed specifically for this purpose).

This committee could write the RFP, oversee a process to select successful proposals, or steer project activities. National projects should have a committee representing a diversity of programs' interests from the full Sea Grant network. Regional projects should have representation from all programs in the region that choose to participate. Regional planning and prioritization would occur when project personnel in state programs met as a region in conjunction with the national project coordinator (this could occur during regular network meetings or through some other venue). Local implementation naturally occurs at the individual program level as each program decides how the project will best be implemented locally. The internal model described in this section documents how review and evaluation of each program's performance might be conducted.

### **Framework for the Coordination and Administration of Regional and National Specialists**

In some instances, national or regional programming might best be facilitated by a specialist instead of a project coordinator as described above. In cases where an extension professional must work with agencies, organizations, and policymakers at a regional or national level to affect change and to address client needs (instead of conducting programming locally), the establishment of a regional or national extension specialist might be more appropriate.

A past example that was well received was the National Ports and Harbors specialist position, formerly held by Tom Dowd. Work performed on turtle exclusion issues affecting clients in all Southeastern states is an example of a regional issue that may have been appropriate for a regional extension

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*Local implementation naturally occurs at the individual program level as each program decides how the project will best be implemented locally.*

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specialist position. Work at the national level on issues concerning ballast water and nonindigenous species might also be appropriate.

Selection of issues, funding of positions, selection of a site to house the position, and oversight of the position could all be conducted as described above for the project coordinator positions. Use of this model would provide for specialists that could work at a level transcending state and program boundaries, provide for input from all Sea Grant Network components, and fund the position in a way that the burden would not be carried by any one program.



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## VII. The Role of the National Office of Sea Grant

**T**here is little doubt within the National Sea Grant Network that its extension component contributes to making Sea Grant a unique and highly successful program within NOAA. Increasingly, agencies within NOAA and in other sectors of the federal government recognize that an extension component significantly adds to their ability to fulfill the organization's mission. The recognition of extension's value should provide ample evidence to the NSGO and to the SGA that Sea Grant Extension is a program element that deserves cultivation and support—as well as protection of its integrity.

This paper has attempted to describe opportunities for regional or national extension programs, some of which may respond to the needs of other federal agencies without undermining the credibility of extension. But what is the role of the National Office of Sea Grant in facilitating regional or national programs?

Given the increased interest of federal agencies to replicate the model established by Sea Grant extension as well as the obvious rationale and opportunities for regional and national extension programs, the National Office has a remarkable opportunity for leadership.

To be most effective in facilitating regional and national Sea Grant programming, the NSGO should

- Provide leadership and guidance, not management and supervision. The Sea Grant network gains its strength and identity from being university based, creative, flexible, collaborative, cooperative, successful and by working well through guidance. Its success would be compromised if the NSGO mandated, structured, managed, or directed the reporting of Sea Grant extension efforts.
- Understand that the network is, and should be, concerned with maintaining hard-earned integrity for providing unbiased, nonregulatory educational programming as the bridge between science-based research and a tremendous variety of clients in need of this technology and information. Neither collaboration for its own sake nor collaboration to provide public relations should be a reason for NSGO activities that undermine that integrity.
- Assist the network in nurturing the networking environment by encouraging needs assessments within the network that result in meaningful, client-based extension programs, or bottom-up approaches and in working at the national level to develop these opportunities. The NSGO plays an indispensable role in facilitating contact with and

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*Active national leadership will ensure that other agencies will not involve Sea Grant Extension but rather partner with Sea Grant Extension and provide additional funding opportunities for Sea Grant Extension to grow.*

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information about federal agency interest and opportunities in collaborative work.

- Provide leadership in working with other federal agencies to identify national collaborative opportunities and possible funding initiatives. Then solicit network input and incorporate network advice into the final initiative. Active national leadership will ensure that other agencies will not involve Sea Grant Extension but rather partner with Sea Grant Extension and provide additional funding opportunities for Sea Grant Extension to grow.
- Support the sharing of information about regional or national Sea Grant extension programming ideas, opportunities, and issues early, widely, and openly throughout the network. Support a free debate about issues related to regional or national Sea Grant extension, regardless of where the idea or issue originates (for example, from Congress or a federal agency), keeping in mind the need to move quickly to take advantage of opportunities. Guidance provided in this document will represent the network's endorsement of general guidelines and operating principles to empower the NSGO to act in an expeditious manner. This sharing of ideas should be to the SGA and to the Assembly.

*This committee fully recognizes that the NSGO is understaffed in the area of extension. If the network and NSGO are fully committed to exploring national and regional extension opportunities, to be effective the NSGO will require additional staffing, namely a person specifically responsible for regional or national programming. This responsibility includes understanding the interests of federal agencies, communicating that interest and the interest of the NSGO to the network, assisting in developing and disseminating effective models, and otherwise ensuring that Sea Grant extension is capable of responding effectively at multiple levels to the many needs and opportunities that exist.*

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## VIII. Conclusion

**R**egional and national SGE programming has a long history in Sea Grant. Given the growing complexity of coastal and marine issues and the need for increasing specialization to address those issues, it is apparent that developing and implementing regional and national extension programs will be even more necessary in the future. The SGEP has employed a variety of mechanisms over the years to conduct these programs. The committee's intent was to provide new ideas and alternative methods for organizing and conducting regional and national programming.

The committee provided the rationale for regional and national SGEP programming, identified best-management practices the network should follow when developing them, suggested some new approaches for implementing programs, recognized procedures to strengthen the regional networks, and addressed the role of the NSGO in identifying and coordinating regional and national programming opportunities. The committee views this report as a medium to provoke discussion within the Sea Grant Network. It is our hope that such discussion will lead to an improved report and ultimately the improved delivery of extension educational programs to Sea Grant's many constituents through regional and national SGEP programming.

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*It is apparent that developing and implementing regional and national extension programs will be even more necessary in the future.*

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# Report of the Assembly of Sea Grant Extension Program Leaders to the Byrne Implementation Team Regarding the Assembly's Report, "Regional and National Programming"

Compiled by Brian Miller and Jay Rasmussen,  
Sea Grant Week 2001

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*This document highlights the similarities between the two reports and offers additional recommendations on how the recommendations of the Byrne Report can best be achieved.*

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There are many similarities between the *Byrne Report* and the report developed by the Assembly of Program Leaders titled *Regional and National Programming: Some Issues, Opportunities, and Conceptual Mechanisms for Improving Sea Grant's Capabilities*. This document highlights the similarities between the two reports and offers additional recommendations to the Implementation Committee on how the recommendations of the *Byrne Report*, relative to regional and national programming, can best be achieved.

The relationship between the two reports is best articulated by the following statement from the *Byrne Report*:

Through NSGO, Sea Grant Extension should develop principles to guide the response to pressing issues and new program opportunities. These principles can be based on the report "Regional and National Sea Grant Extension Programming" developed by an ad hoc committee of the Assembly of SGEP leaders. This report addresses new approaches and guidelines for national and regional extension programming. The Panel endorses several of the ideas in the report.

The Assembly encourages the implementation team to consult the Assembly report for implementation strategies recommended in the report. The Assembly hopes recommendations on issues including "Framework for the Coordination and Administration of Regional and National Programming" and "Framework for the Coordination and Administration of Regional and National Specialists" will be useful to the committee as they work toward implementation strategies.

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There are four topical areas where the two reports specifically coincide: (1) national partnerships, (2) regional and national programming, (3) state partnerships, and (4) regional and national networks. A summary follows.

## **I. National Partnerships**

### ***Byrne Report***

The need for engagement with citizens exists for several agencies within the federal government. NSGO has the opportunity to work with other federal agencies in engagement with citizens of the United States. By combining or coordinating efforts in partnerships, all can benefit. *The Panel recommends that appropriate partnership opportunities be explored and pursued by the NSGO. Further, it recommends that the NSGO add one additional staff person with responsibility for developing and administering such external partnerships.*

**We would like to emphasize the partnership criteria of the assembly's report. These criteria address the following:**

- The mission of the partnering agency is compatible with Sea Grant and that agency provides access to quality scientific information that can be extended to Sea Grant clients.
- There must be widespread interest in doing state-level programming on the selected topics. If the issue is national, a significant number of programs must have interest in working on the program at the local level. Regional projects require interest from a majority of the programs in the region.
- The topic or issue selected should be in response to a need, not done opportunistically because funds are available. The process should be driven by traditional extension techniques. Needs and values of users should be the first consideration. In cases of nonconsensus, a body (such as the Leadership Council) should be empowered to make a final decision regarding Sea Grant's involvement in this topic or issue. Once a decision is reached, it is important for the entire network to support the leadership, stand by the decision, and speak with one voice.
- Any partnering agency involved must be willing to abide by the extension principle of program delivery that does not advocate a single solution, but presents a range of science-based alternatives from which users select a solution.

The Assembly wishes to add the following issues for further discussion by the implementation team regarding partnerships:

- There needs to be a commitment to funding support by the partnering agency.
- The specific purpose, duration, and exit strategy should be well understood.

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*There are four topical areas where the two reports specifically coincide: (1) national partnerships, (2) regional and national programming, (3) state partnerships, and (4) regional and national networks.*

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*Evaluation of program delivery by both Sea Grant and their partners is essential to good programming.*

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- Evaluation of program delivery by both Sea Grant and their partners is essential to good programming.

The Assembly concurs with the recommendation of adding a full FTE in the NSGO to facilitate regional and national programming. This responsibility includes understanding the interests of federal agencies, communicating that interest and the interest of the NSGO to the network, assisting in developing and disseminating effective models, and otherwise ensuring that Sea Grant extension is capable of responding effectively at multiple levels to the many needs and opportunities that exist.

## **II. Regional and National Extension Programming**

### ***Byrne Report***

*The Panel recommends the establishment of regional extension programs.* Such programs should be multistate in nature and, where possible, should be competitively funded by the NSGO in partnership with other agencies in response to proposals developed to address grassroots needs. The regional programs selected for funding should be focused on issues that truly reflect regional or multistate needs.

The Assembly fully agrees with the Byrne panel recommendation; however, we would like to clarify the role of the national office and emphasize the importance of adding funds allocated for regional and national programming to the core budgets of state programs. We would like to highlight six specific recommendations made in the Assembly report and in our deliberations yesterday:

1. *Emphasize adding funds for regional and national programming to the core budgets of state programs as opposed to funding through temporary competitions.*
  - New SG dollars, obtained through funding initiatives or other means, should with time be folded into network-wide core funding.
  - Core funding of individual Sea Grant College Programs (SGCP) should have a transparent and competitive means of growing.
  - Any increases in core funding through a modified NSI process should be better integrated into individual SGCPs omnibus plans so as to maximize involvement of communications, extension, and education.
  - NSIs in the field relating to ocean, coastal, and Great Lakes resources should be developed cooperatively by the Panel, the National Sea Grant College Program Office, and the Sea Grant Institutes.
2. Evaluation of a state program's performance on regional and national programming with core funds should be conducted through the PAT process.

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3. The role of the NSGO should be to *encourage, reward, and facilitate* regional and national programming, not mandate or control it.
  4. Regional programming could be enhanced by the NSGO's providing funds for regional programming activities to each regional network that could be spent on activities agreed upon by the regional Sea Grant Network (for example, travel to work together and product development).
  5. Regional and national programming should be an integral part of strategies and activities conducted by Sea Grant's theme teams.
  6. Funds available to facilitate regional and national programming should recognize and mitigate limitations posed by matching-fund requirements on participating programs and their partners.

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*The role of the NSGO should be to encourage, reward, and facilitate regional and national programming, not mandate or control it.*

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### **III. State Partnerships**

#### ***Byrne Report***

During the past two decades, the decreasing proportion of federal Sea Grant funds that support the salaries of extension staff in the field, and the need to maintain staff levels, have caused SG program directors to obtain substantial shares of staff salaries from non-Sea Grant funds (state, private, or local agencies, for example). While this “buy-in” is viewed as testimony to the excellent work of SGEP, such external funding creates the potential for a dilution of allegiance to the core Sea Grant extension program. *The Panel recommends that formal principles be developed to guide the use of outside funds in the support of program priorities and needs at the strategic planning level.*

We concur with this recommendation and would like to emphasize the partnership selection criteria detailed in the Assembly report.

### **IV. Regional and National Networks**

#### ***Byrne Report***

One of the strengths of NSGCP lies in its ability to plan, organize, and deliver programs as a coordinated network, especially by its extension program. Regional programs, subject-based programs, and the sharing of talent and information across programs and between people all make the extension program more than the sum of its parts. It is not uncommon for the results of a Sea Grant research project at one university to be applied throughout the nation because the extension program works in concert with other organizations and agencies. *The Panel recommends that NSGCP encourage and fund more regional and national networks.* Talent sharing and professional development in and among pro-

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grams should also be encouraged and supported through peer-group meetings and through continuing education on a regular basis.

The Assembly concurs with this recommendation and would like to emphasize the role and importance of intellectual and issue-based networks needed for programming in the 21st century. This concept is illustrated by approaches such as Sea Grant's theme-team concept. Additional recommendations for intellectual programming are detailed in the Assembly's report and include recommendations for networking in three primary ways:

- Regional or geography-based networking
- Issue-based networking or intellectual regions
- Networking of field staff

The Assembly greatly appreciates the opportunity to participate as a member of the Sea Grant community in working toward implementation of new strategies that will improve Sea Grant's extension programs in this century.